



VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Prepared by	Joe Burns
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Introduction

Our volunteer policy has been created to show our volunteers and potential volunteers that we have spent time and care in planning how volunteers will be welcomed at the Justice and Peace Commission. It also outlines that all volunteers will be treated in a fair and consistent way. It should also help our volunteers understand what support is available to them and what they can expect from us.

About us

The Justice and Peace Commission is an integral part of the catholic Diocese of Leeds. It was set up by the Bishop of Leeds over 40 years ago to promote and implement Catholic Social teaching in the wake of the Second Vatican Council. The purpose of the Commission is to

- Be an official presence in the Diocese – recognising that Working for Justice and Peace is an essential element of being a Catholic
- Celebrate and encourage all those people in the Diocese of Leeds who are not only concerned about issues of Social Justice but who get involved in all sorts of ways – from campaigning about climate change to working with asylum seekers, from helping with food banks to writing letters to prisoners of conscience
- Provide a prophetic voice about issues of Social Justice. We do this by promoting discussion and raising awareness of key social issues.
- Collaborate with other local and national organisations that work on social justice issues. We especially are interested in reaching out to other faith groups and to work ecumenically and in inter-faith dialogue

The Commission itself is a group of volunteers meeting on a regular basis to decide priorities and make decisions about activities to be undertaken.

The Commission has no paid staff and all work is undertaken either by volunteers or by service providers. The activities are classed as core services – such as the maintenance of the website, servicing Commission meetings and the production of newsletters. All other activities are treated as projects –time limited activities with specific objectives.

The scope of the work undertaken is limited by the financial resources available to it. In 2014-15 and in 2015-16 the total annual spend has been in the region of £10k. At the present time the Commission is seeking additional funding from a range of sources so that it can significantly increase its work.

In the last two years the principal activities have included:-



- Re-developing its website and maintaining it on a regular basis with a view to it becoming a natural 'go to' website for those wanting to find out more about social justice issues in the Diocese of Leeds.
- Issuing a regular E-newsletter. This is distributed electronically to a list of about 400 individuals and churches and is downloaded from our website by about another 100 people.
- Holding 2-3 conferences/awareness raising events per year. These have had attendances of between 50 – 100 people and been on topics related to current priorities: Climate Change, Palestine and UK poverty.

Our vision and mission for volunteering

Volunteering is a great way to share your skills and ideas whilst also making a contribution to the Justice & Peace Commission. By volunteering with us you will be making a positive contribution to raising the profile of Social Justice Issues in the Leeds Diocese. Volunteers are vital to our work.

Attracting volunteers and volunteer agreement

We have a range of opportunities for volunteers to get involved in. Each volunteering opportunity has a description of the work that has to be done and the skills and experiences we are looking for to deliver the work described. All applicants to become a volunteer must complete a **Volunteer Application Form**. Once received, a member of the Commission will get in touch so that you can both meet to discuss the role.

It does not matter how much you already know, as there will be opportunities to learn, and we have roles to suit different levels of expertise and experience.

Where it is necessary we will undertake checks using the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS).

There will be an induction prepared and delivered by someone from the Commission. This will include:

- Some information about the Justice & Peace Commission, our vision, mission and our future plans
- the role of the volunteer
- tour around our office and the facilities that are available to us
- copy of all relevant policies including this volunteer policy
- essential procedures such as timekeeping
- information about training and ongoing learning opportunities

There will be a trial period to give the Commission and you time to discover if you are suited to each other. A review will be made midway through the trial period and also at the end. This is not an assessment, it is just so that we can be sure that you benefit the most from the volunteering experience and maximise the time you are giving freely. The trial period will depend on the nature of the volunteering carried out.

Support

There will be a designated Commission contact who will provide support to you (in specific roles you may need to report to someone else in relation to the activities that you are doing). They will remain your key contact throughout your volunteering with us. This will include regular meetings with you to discuss how you are getting on, discuss any training needs and deal with issues arising. This will also ensure that the Commission is doing all it can to make your volunteering experience an enjoyable and meaningful one. We could not do the work we do without our volunteers. To acknowledge this we will always say thank you and show appreciation for a job well done. There will always be a listening ear or shoulder to lean on.



We value our volunteers and want to ensure that there are no barriers to volunteer involvement. All reasonable out of pocket expenses, if required, will be reimbursed including expenses for travel and meals (if working more than 4.5 hours in one session). In order to claim expenses, an Expenses Form must be completed, a valid receipt provided and this should be handed in at the office so that it can be processed by the Treasurer.

Insurance, health and safety, accidents and risk assessment

The Justice & Peace Commission is an integral part of the Catholic Diocese of Leeds and is covered by its insurance policy so that volunteers are covered by public liability insurance, which you are advised to read. It covers the volunteering activities you will be doing. We will keep reminding you of Health and Safety good practice and give simple instructions on how to perform each task safely.

Resolving problems

We hope that you will have a very enjoyable experience volunteering with us. However if your role as a volunteer does not meet with your expectations or with the commitments we have made to you, we want you to feel comfortable about letting us know. First of all, talk to your volunteer contact and he or she should be able to sort it out with you before it becomes a problem. If you do not feel this will resolve things you can speak to the Chair of the Commission.

Confidentiality

We expect all volunteers to adhere to confidentiality guidelines which will be explained to you before you begin volunteering with us and this also includes use of social media and contact with any press.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

The Justice & Peace Commission is committed to embracing diversity and promoting equality and inclusion. When representing the Commission as a volunteer we expect you to support our commitment to these values.

Volunteering whilst on benefit

You can still volunteer with us if you are receiving benefits provided that you and we follow the legal guidelines.